

TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY



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TRA Requests Telephone Number Conservation Efforts; BellSouth First to Respond

NASHVILLE – Efforts are afoot by one telecommunications provider to address the area code shortage problem facing Tennessee.

BellSouth, in response to a recent request made by the Tennessee Regulatory Authority (TRA), has agreed to release (18) telephone number prefixes to the North American Number Plan Administrator (NANPA) that, once put into service, will add to the state's existing pool of available numbers. NANPA is the federal agency that monitors number consumption across the nation.

The move by BellSouth came after the Directors of the TRA urged the state's telecommunications service providers, "to consider taking voluntary measures" to conserve the state's area codes "including, but not limited to, voluntarily relinquishing any non-utilized or otherwise dormant inventory of" telephone number prefixes.

In addition, the company plans to request that NANPA investigate to determine if an additional (56) unused codes are available for reclamation.

"BellSouth has recognized the seriousness of the matter and, as a good corporate citizen, has acted forthrightly to our request. And for this, we applaud their responsiveness," says TRA Executive Secretary, David Waddell.

TRA experts point to two primary factors that contribute to area code consumption: consumer demand for telecommunications services, and an increasing number of telecommunications providers combined with the non-use of the telephone numbers assigned to them. It is the "non-use" of numbers that has ushered in the subject of number conservation.

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The issue has resonated with federal regulators, the TRA, and other state regulatory commissions who view the need to constantly provide area code relief as troublesome in light of the fact that many available numbers are going unused.

To address Tennessee's problem, TRA officials recently petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for authority to implement number conservation measures, which has seen its area code numbers grow from two as recently as 1995, to the current number of five. National area code industry officials anticipate that (615) will exhaust sometime during the last quarter of the year 2000.

TRA officials are in the process of determining how BellSouth's action will impact area code relief in the state.

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